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ABSTRACT

Educators are recognizing that the preparation of young people for the future is beyond the capacity of education alone. This paper provides a theoretical background on the need for partnerships, describing the forces that have contributed to the development of partnerships. It also offers information on the nature and levels of partnerships, giving examples of each type. Educational partnerships form a continuum with differing levels of participation and require certain attributes to be effective: (1) a common vision, overarching goals, and shared norms; (2) trust; (3) complementary resources; (4) compensatory resources; and (5) extraordinary results. The most sophisticated and fully developed partnership is the comprehensive collaborative model, which addresses the comprehensive needs of children from preschool through high school. Terry Clark's comprehensive collaborative model (1992) is highlighted. The model's concept, purpose, and implementation/development issues are briefly discussed. Three figures are included. (Contains 12 annotated references.) (LMI)

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Developing Effective Educational Partnerships: The Why, What, and How

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Introduction

Interdependence, collaboration, consensus, team building, and shared decision-making are some of the concepts that are being explored and promoted everywhere from the White House to the schoolhouse. These concepts indicate a shift from isolation and individualism to developing partnerships. As educators begin to redefine schooling to fit the Information Age, we now understand that we cannot do it alone. This paper will provide a theoretical background on the need for partnerships; information on the nature and levels of partnerships with examples; a comprehensive collaborative partnership model; and a resource list.

Theoretical Background

All of us are being faced with new and different challenges. We are constantly being bombarded with issues related to our environment, shifting socioeconomic conditions, changing international political structures, technology, the need to develop a sense of community and to promote a deeper regard for humanity—and the list continues. These interdependent issues present a new challenge to educators. We need to redefine schooling for the twenty-first century. As new definitions of schooling emerge, a set of greater expectations will follow. (Cole & Schlechty, 1992)

Educators are being asked to do something we have never done before. For example, a current educational belief is that all students can learn. Therefore, we should be educating all students. That belief can be seen in action in programs dealing with sex equity, and children who are at-risk, minority, and/or handicapped.

In the past, educators were not expected to educate all students. In 1910 only 10% of American students graduated with a high school diploma. In 1910 that was not a problem because there were farms and factories to employ people without a high school education. Today 83% of the students achieve either a high school diploma or a General Equivalency Diploma (Glickman, 1993). More education is required by the demands of a service-oriented, globally competitive, technological Information Age. It is not that schools are doing badly. It is that the schools are being asked to do something they have never had to do before. And schools cannot do it alone.

The concept of partnerships is one approach to meeting the new challenges. There are several forces that have driven or contributed to the development of educational partnerships:

1. **The task at hand is enormous and complex.** This point was made in the previous section.
2. **Schools are multi-functional corporations.** In addition to academic instruction, schools now are expected to provide transportation, food service, police and security systems, health care, counseling services, diagnostic systems, drug and AIDS education, and after-school care/latchkey programs. Although schools once were essen-t ially responsible for only academic instruction, that is no longer true.
3. **There has been a breakdown in traditional support systems.** Schools are multi-functional because, for the first time in history, institutions that once gave our children support are not there or are weakened. These include community, church, extended family, and even the nuclear family. (Young & Rubicam, 1991)
4. **Schools and other "partners" have similar activities and/or clients.** For example, drug prevention education in Hawaii involves drug free schools programs, the federal government, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, and the court systems—all delivering complementary or similar services to the same clients.

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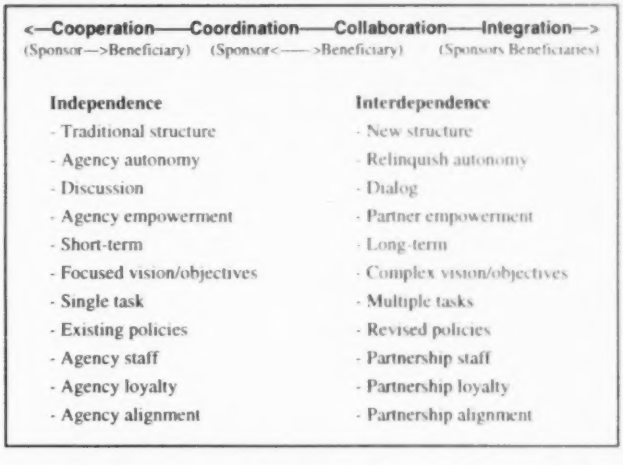
5. **Resource leveraging in dollars and expertise occurs when there is an effective partnership.** It is clear that schools do not have sufficient money nor the range of personnel to handle all the demands being thrust upon them. Partnerships can provide additional resources to address challenges.
6. **External mandates require partnerships.** Some state legislatures have found "partnerships" to be an attractive solution to education's ills. For example, in Hawaii, legislation was passed to have every public school participate in school/community-based management. In this process six role groups share in the decision making for the operation of the school. The role groups include students, teachers, parents, administrators, classified staff (non-certificated staff at the school), and community members.

At least three dimensions become evident when examining existing educational partnerships: 1) They form a continuum with 2) differing levels of participation and 3) require certain attributes to be effective. All three of these dimensions must be addressed to facilitate an effective partnership.

Figure 1 presents a continuum of partnerships (Intriligator, 1992; Clark, 1992). It illustrates that partnerships can range from informal cooperation to highly integrated systems. It also shows how the reciprocity of the relationships changes as you move along the continuum.

Figure 1. **Continuum of Partnerships**



Examples of partnerships at the "cooperation" end of the continuum include any activities where a sponsor is providing something to a beneficiary. Financial support for sponsorship of events (i.e., speech contests, conferences) or the purchase of items (i.e., band uniforms, athletic equipment) is often the hallmark of this type of partnership. Each partner functions autonomously and works cooperatively on short-term, single tasks within existing policies. Many "adopt a school" programs would be in this category.

An example of a "coordination and collaboration" partnership is an existing business-education compact where both partners benefit from the relationship (Kali, 1990; Nachtigal & Parker, 1990; National Alliance of Business, 1989). In this partnership, for example, the State Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and a coalition of businesses might support employability skills classes in high schools.

The most sophisticated and well-developed partnerships fall on the integration end of the continuum. This type of partnership is interdependent, requires a new structure, provides partner empowerment, is long-term, and has a complex vision, multiple tasks, and revised policies. A health academy located in a high school in Hawaii is a good example of an integrated partnership. The health academy is a partnership of major medical and health providers in Hawaii and is affiliated with the University of Hawaii Medical School, the community colleges, and the Department of Education. The core academic subjects focus on the health theme. Health industry professionals are key to the integration of skills and knowledge and in providing hands-on opportunities in the field. Students have mentors during their junior year and real-life work experiences during their senior year. Teachers work in teams; the partners support curriculum and staff development. The partners also sit on a Steering Committee that collaboratively makes policy and program decisions. After graduation, students can decide to enter the health field, continue with health education, or go on to higher education in another field. This partnership is an institutionalized part of the system. (Stone, 1991)

In addition to the range or continuum of types of partnerships, the level or depth of participation by the partners can vary. Figure 2 shows levels of participation in partnerships (Senge, 1990).

Figure 2. **Levels of Participation in Partnerships**

1. **Apathy**. Neither for nor against the vision. Participants have no interest.
2. **Noncompliance**. Participants do not see the benefits of the vision and will not do what is expected.
3. **Grudging compliance**. Functioning at this level or the next two levels would be considered forced partnering. Participants do not see the benefits of the vision. They will do enough of what is expected because they have to, but also let it be known that they are not on board.
4. **Formal compliance**. Partners accept the vision but only do what is expected and no more.
5. **Genuine compliance**. Partners at this level are followers who go along with the vision and do what is expected of them. They support the vision to a degree but are not truly enrolled or committed.
6. **Enrollment**. The partners' names are "placed on the roll." They become partners by choice. The partners do whatever can be done within the existing rules and/or structures.
7. **Commitment**. The partners are fully responsible for making the vision happen. They do whatever it takes to make the vision real, including "changing the rules." They bring energy, passion, and excitement to the partnership.

The third observation of existing partnerships is the attributes of effective partnerships. These attributes can be found over and over again in partnerships that are making a significant impact in education.

Figure 3. **Attributes of Exceptional Partnerships**

- Common vision, overarching goals, and shared norms
- Trust
- Complementary resources
- Compensatory resources
- Extraordinary results

Terry Clark's Comprehensive Collaborative Partnership Model

Among the various ways to establish an effective educational partnership, Terry Clark's concept of a "comprehensive collaborative" stands out (Clark, 1992). Clark provides a framework on how to develop partnerships that possess all the attributes listed in Figure 3. This type of partnership falls on the "integration" end of the continuum presented in Figure 1. This model promotes long-term and far-reaching impact, with all partners receiving benefits:

Concept: Comprehensive collaboratives are the most sophisticated and fully developed partnerships. They are broad-based, involve multiple organizations, and require long-term institutional commitment. They proceed with commonly shared visions, goals, and objectives developed through consensus, shared authority and decision making, new roles and relationships for the various players, integrated delivery of multiple services, and cross-institutional activities. Most importantly, they address the comprehensive needs of children, from preschool through high school.

Purpose: To create a dynamic force to provide coordinated, quality programs and services to children and families in order to enable students to function more successfully in school and society.

How-to's: Issues to consider:

- Ensuring that participation includes the community's diverse ethnic and cultural elements.
- Soliciting top CEO support and leadership from each sector of the community.
- Involving the media in eliciting broad community support.
- Working out turf issues that may inhibit smooth functioning.
- Ensuring that responsibilities are clearly delineated and supported by all partners.
- Sharing leadership among collaborative partners.
- Articulating both the school's and community's objectives.
- Articulating and responding to students' needs.
- Building trust, flexibility, and open communications among partners.
- Designing methods for measuring school performance and student outcomes.
- Exploring alternative structures.
- Institutionalizing the collaboration.
- Funding the management structure.

Conclusion

Facilitating educational success through the development of partnerships has been increasing steadily as various organizations, agencies, and institutions realize that more can be achieved when they work together. In a survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, it was found that from 1987 through 1989, 40% of the nation's public schools were engaged in some kind of formal partnership with an external institution. In urban areas, 54% of the partnerships were with businesses, 17% were between schools and civic or service organizations, and 9% were with postsecondary institutions (Clark, 1992). As educators face more and more challenges to meet the demands of an unknown future, it becomes evident that the task of preparing our young people is beyond what we can do by ourselves. As profoundly stated in an old proverb: It takes a whole village to educate a child. The concept of partnership is not new, but today it encompasses the Global Village of the Information Age.

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An advertising agency team looks at the role of schools in the United States and how they meet the real needs of our children, the society of today, and the society of the future.

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